

February 22, 2017

Appropriations Committee  
Public budget Hearings, Room 2C  
Legislative Office Building  
300 Capital Avenue, #5100  
Hartford CT 06106

Esteemed members of the Appropriations Transportation Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony. I am a resident of Waterford, a frequent Shore Line East rider, and an environmental and social justice activist, who is concerned about the state's transportation priorities pertaining to the funding of this commuter train. I am a single older woman of meager means and own an older vehicle which I do not drive on longer trips and I worry about the effect this proposal may have on raising the cost of tickets. I know that I am not the only one in this income level and situation that rely very much on keeping the schedule and fees as is. This would also effect my son, who lives in Brooklyn, NY, and our visits with each other which mean very much to each of us.

Please keep the current level of Shore Line East service in the budget.

I am concerned that in a tight budget year, the Governor's transportation funds for Shore Line East service will be cut to 50% of current levels. I am also concerned that we prioritize car transportation over rail, to the detriment of our Southeastern Connecticut citizens and businesses.

I believe strongly of keeping SLE service in the budget as it currently is is extremely important. Current rail investments have been a success that need to be maintained. The relatively small investment in extending weekend SLE service to New London has paid off. New London is now the third busiest weekend train station, behind New Haven and Old Saybrook. Clearly if adequate commuter rail is available, it will be used.

Please think long and hard about service reductions or raising fares as it may kill rail forever. Please consider the common citizen and their family before adding considerable burden to the already heavy load. We've already heard from New London and surrounding residents who commute to New Haven on Shore Line East that one of the reasons they can't use rail all the time is that there's no way for them to get back to New London in the middle of the day if they needed to care for their children. Rail service that is not practical makes it less attractive to use, and then fewer riders leads to a snowball effect of declining ridership. We may never recover the momentum that has begun.

Even if I had a newer vehicle, investing in automobiles is a losing proposition and one that doesn't position the state to be successful in a changing world. One car traveling between New London and New Haven generates 1,848 lbs. of carbon dioxide and 84 lbs. of pollution every month and consumes approximately 50 gallons of gas. Private automobiles use twice as much fuel and generate almost twice as much carbon dioxide and pollution as public transportation.

My son and his generation of the work force are more interested than ever to ride rail. Connecticut is one of the few states where residents can enjoy a high living standard with public transportation to job hubs like Stamford, New York and New Haven. It's been recognized that Millennials are seeking out cities where they don't need to own a car. Connecticut can capitalize on this trend.

Thank you,

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